

February 8, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

The following may be of interest to you as a Community problem. I have not made it available to anyone else.

This morning Henry Kissinger assembled his staff for a briefing on the recently launched operations into Laos for the purpose of disrupting the North Vietnamese flow of supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

In the course of this briefing he referred to Sihanoukville "as one of our greatest intelligence failures" and said, "After all, it isn't Outer Mongolia." He elaborated by saying that prior to the fall of Sihanouk intelligence estimates of war materiel moving through Sihanoukville and on into South Vietnam were only 10% to 15% of the actual volume moved. He noted that MACV had submitted an estimate reflecting one-third of the actual movement of materiel but this was given short shrift in the intelligence community.

Following the briefing, HAK was queried further on the reasons for intelligence failures. He made the following points:

- (a) The Intelligence Community tends to follow rather than lead the policy-making mechanism or policy decisions of the Administration.
- (b) The methodology employed tends toward under-estimation -- If something can't be observed or confirmed it is non-existent and therefore non-reportable. By way of illustration he cited questions raised re contents of trucks moving from Sihanoukville across Cambodia into South Vietnam. The reply was that these trucks were carrying rice. When the question was asked how it was known that the trucks were carrying rice, the response was "because this is the kind of truck that carries rice in Cambodia."
- (c) Brief reference was also made in similar context to the placement of Soviet missiles in the Egyptian desert.

HAK stressed that the intelligence analyses, judgments and estimates are made by sincere, dedicated and intelligent people but he questioned the methodology.